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THE ORIGINAL RAPHAEL TAPESTRIES,

THE SAME AS

LEO THE TENTH SET,

AT

ROME.

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TRUHL, WILLIAM

INTRODUCTION.

GREAT curiosity having been expressed to have the nine subjects of these Works submitted to public view, it is with much regret, for the present, abandoned.

The difficulty of room sufficient, will be evident to those acquainted with the extent of the gallery at Hampton Palace, which only contains the *seven* Cartoons, while these Tapestries, the same size, consist of *nine*—called *the Henry the Eighth set.* A brief narrative of the whole series will show the importance of these; for of nineteen subjects existing, as original works, seven only are on Cartoon, and twelve in Tapestry; nothing else remains original to perpetuate "the magic mind of Raphael" in "the best of his works;"—and of the Tapestry, little is known in England, or even the subjects, beyond the seven at Hampton.

To the Henry the Eighth set of nine Tapestries,—particular attention is requested in Great Britain, and also Foreign Countries, where the fine arts are cultivated; for there exists no other series, except the larger one at Rome, that can compare, either in subjects or composition; and no other opportunity can occur to possess such *chef-d'œuvres* of art;—the admiration of the contemporaries of Raphael, and the public at Rome, at the highest period of the arts, in the sixteenth century—and extolled by all enlightened writers on the subject.

The antiquity has in no way injured the grand effect of these Tapestries: time may subdue the glare of colour, and glitter of gold; but it is to the mind chiefly these works are directed; and these superficial and more alluring beauties are reduced more in harmony with the subjects—and, being composed of such rare materials, the colours rendered so durable by art, they will continue in good condition for centuries to come.

THE ORIGINAL

RAPHAEL TAPESTRIES.

DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY.

THE original designs, and the Tapestries wrought from them, consisted of twenty-five subjects.

OF THE DESIGNS,

Seven only remain, and are in the Palace at Hampton, called "THE CARTOONS OF RAPHAEL."

OF THE TAPESTRIES,

Two sets were wrought, and nineteen of the Pope's set remain at Rome.

OF THE OTHER SET,

Six are in the palace at Dresden, and nine in possession of a merchant in London; of the rest, nothing is known.

The title of "*Raphael Tapestries*" applies only to the two sets wrought at Brussels about the year 1517, under the especial appointments of Raphael himself—to perpetuate in the Tapestry, his own great designs

of the Cartoons, and to gratify the lofty feelings of Pope Leo the Tenth, whose exalted views were at once grasped by the mighty mind of Raphael—in resources as boundless as his patron was profuse.

These important subjects from the New Testament were required by the pope in the splendid Tapestries of Arras, to adorn his palace, and to exhibit, on certain great days, to the public in St. Peter's, at Rome.

The arts were at this period made a medium of instruction to the people, and these Tapestries were intended, by the exquisite work and splendour, to call forth no less homage than admiration;—and however great the designs of the Cartoons, they were merely intended as patterns or models for the Tapestry.

The Brussels factory, then, excelled all other times in the art of working Tapestry, yet it had never attempted so costly and extensive a series as the Cartoons, and with the greatest names of any age or time, for patron and model.

The high state of the arts in Italy required these great mental lessons to be produced, with all the intellectual skill and ornate splendour of the times; for Leo's object was to outdo all that had been done—

Raphael, then in the zenith of his powers to excel himself—and how wonderful he performed his part, three centuries and the best writers on the subject, bear testimony; for it is certain, that neither the Cartoons or these Tapestries have been equalled.—Raphael knew, that in his days of excellence mere show would not be regarded, and unless in the Tapestries his own intellectual works were produced, he had laboured in vain. The greatest factory skill and manner of dividing the labour could not effect this—it required the mind to guide the hands—he therefore appointed two of his chief pupils, who had greatly assisted in painting the Cartoons, Van Orlay and Michael Coxis, to superintend the working at Brussels;—hence chiefly rests the matchless excellence of the Raphael Tapestries.

The expense was enormous, but the success complete; for, says Peacham,

"Never eye beheld more absolute art."

Lanzi—one of the best Italian writers on the arts, also says of these Tapestries—

"In questi Arazzi l'arte ha tocco il piú alto signo, ne dopo essi ha veduto il mondo cosa ugualmente bella."

In English:—"In these Tapestries art has reached its highest summit, nor has the world since seen anything equally beautiful."

The great fame of these *chef-d'œuvres* of art spread over Europe, several factories were esta-

blished, and various attempts made to work the subjects of the Cartoons, but with as little success as the copies in painting. The character and great mental feeling of Raphael were entirely lost, and proved that none could grapple with these great master subjects but the original workers on them.—The transcendent merits of these great works of Raphael may be judged of by the total want of success in all the copies, though it may be attributed more to the mighty genius they had to approach, than the absence of talent in those making the attempt.—But few of Raphael's pupils attempted to copy his larger works; the smaller, several did with great truth.

Modern times have produced several copies of the Cartoons; the best is thought to be in the Royal Academy, by Sir James Thornhill, but, like others, partake little of Raphael, wanting the freedom and power of the master, and *all the intensity of feeling* of the originals—the genius and great mental worth of Raphael rests where himself placed it—in his Cartoons, and in his Tapestries.

Paris—now the centre of the arts—recedes more than three centuries to render homage to the divine works of Raphael! *now,* repeating in Tapestries the subjects of the Hampton Cartoons; but not to rival. Indeed, without a miracle, how could even the great skill of the Gobelins factory, produce a sem-

blance of Raphael in Tapestry, working from copies in oil?—wanting the genius which makes the Cartoons great; all the essentials which render the Raphael Tapestry unique! namely,—*the Cartoons,*—*Van Orlay*—and *M. Coxis*—*and Leo's gold.* All other Tapestries of these subjects are also without these essentials, and therefore no more like the two sets of Leo's—than copies are like the original Cartoons.

THE HISTORY OF THE CARTOONS AND THE RAPHAEL TAPESTRIES

Is as extraordinary as the works themselves. Alternately in the palaces of popes, kings and princes; regarded as the most splendid works of art: then the spoils of war—neglected, dispersed, and left to perish! disfigured by ignorance, and mutilated by avarice!

Leo, with his usual munificence, ordered two sets of the Tapestry, each set of twenty-five subjects—one set for himself, the other as presents to sovereigns—nine were sent to King Henry the Eighth of England, seven to the King of Saxony, and others to Vienna.

At the time the Tapestries were causing the greatest admiration to crowds at Rome, the Cartoons were neglected and forgotten, left to moulder at Brussels for near a century; seven or eight only escaped, much damaged and mutilated! *all the rest lost and destroyed.*

The Tapestries were carried off from Rome, in 1526, as the spoils of war; again, in 1798; and only escaped being burnt, by producing to the Jew-purchaser a few ounces too little of gold and silver in the threads: *nineteen* were re-purchased, and once more in the Vatican at Rome.

The Henry the Eighth set of nine subjects, possessed by the unfortunate King Charles, were sold, with his effects, in 1649, to the Duke of Alba, and remained in his Palace in Spain until again sold; and brought to England fifteen years since, where they remain, carefully boxed up.

Above three centuries have elapsed!—now, the seven Cartoons so neglected at Brussels are in a Palace, extolled beyond all other works of art; and the most learned men brought before Parliament, to devise how best to perpetuate them!—whilst the nine subjects in Tapestry are lingering in obscurity!—yet, like the other great works at Rome and Hampton, possessing all the properties to form the taste, and enlighten the mind.

The originality is beyond dispute. Tapestry cannot indeed, like paint, be rubbed and patched on; the work is too rare to admit of it, and impossible to copy without that concentrated power of art and patronage which embellished the times they were produced in.—Besides, Leo's two sets may easily be recognized, having the draperies and many other parts *wrought in gold and silver threads, which none else have;* and each of these nine bear the seal of the Duke of Alba, and repeated on a certificate from him, in proof of the purchase from the effects of King Charles.

The Subjects.

1. The Miraculous Draught of Fishes.
2. Christ's Charge to St. Peter.
3. St. Paul and Barnabas at Lystra.
4. St. Paul Preaching at Athens.
5. The Death of Ananias.
6. Elymas the Sorcerer Struck Blind.
7. St. Peter healing the Cripple at the Beautiful Gate.

Not in the Hampton Collection.

8. The Martyrdom of St. Stephen.
9. The Conversion of St. Paul.

REMARKS.

The importance of these Tapestries, in extending the Hampton series from seven to nine, is obvious; when more publications of the seven have taken place the last fifteen years than for three centuries!—and still constantly in progress, under various new inventions of graphic art. Indeed, there is no science that has had a more rapid advance than engraving; and the results are of the first consequence. LANZI—after speaking of Raphael's Tapestries, &c. says—

"But all these works of Raphael would not have contributed to the extension of art at that period beyond the meridian of Rome, if he had not succeeded in extending the fruits of his genius, by means of prints."—*Roscoe's Trans. of Lanzi,* Vol. II. p. 83.

And it was from the studio of Raphael that Marc Antonio's school of engraving rose to great perfection, which makes it the more extraordinary that the Cartoons, after having served as patterns for the Tapestry, were not returned to Rome, but the whole series of twenty-five left at Brussels!—two-thirds were lost and destroyed, and the seven or eight left greatly damaged!

This proves, at least, that the Tapestries were the prime object—that the best judges of art were satisfied with them—and that the Cartoons were not

required, or thought of any material use at Rome.—It is not intended that the Cartoons are less, but that the Tapestry has its great merit also; and in this spirit Lanzi writes of the Tapestry at Rome:—

"It is wonderful to behold the crowds that flock to see them, and who ever regard them with fresh avidity and delight."—*Roscoe's Trans. of Lanzi,* Vol. II. p. 82.

Should the Cartoons ultimately settle down, according to the general desire, in London, the Tapestries would well supply their place at Hampton—or, give equal fame to any gallery, the other set does to the Vatican at Rome—and with the present wants of the country, for the further diffusion of the fine arts, in towns of great wealth and population, much advantage might be derived by putting before the people there such pure and exciting productions of art, in taste—worthy a new era, from which dawns the foundation of institutions, posterity will be grateful for.

The necessity for public galleries of art claims daily more attention, when it is seen into what unexpected channels the fine arts are *forcing* their way among the middle classes.—Who could have imagined, a few years back, that an eminent artist would be employed to paint a series of subjects *(Watteau)* on the panels in the cabin of a steam-ship! intended merely as a passage and freight-vessel, to trade

between Bristol and New York! not a yacht, or queen's ship, but for the—"monarchs of the middle class!"

Where have the people acquired the taste to demand this? exotic! suggested in that kaleidescope for the world, Paris—which all countries pay tribute to view, or collect ideas from.—The arts are a constant spring of wealth, flowing into France; and when the railroad is in action to Paris, the English will swarm there.

Many valuable opinions might be quoted in favour of extending the benefit of the arts to our country; and so to harmonise with commerce, to serve both.

A noble merchant has eloquently said, "With the progress of the arts, the wealth of a country is increased, and the intelligence of a people advanced."

A Rev. Bishop—"Every one should know, that the fine arts gave splendour and effect to manufactures, and increased their commercial field."

Others,—"That almost every article produced, where the fabric is connected with the fine arts, we are surpassed by foreign nations."

Useful institutions are no doubt multiplying; and

there is a social necessity for the further diffusion of general advantages, formerly enjoyed by a few.—There cannot be a doubt, that public galleries of art contribute more to the advancement of taste in a people, than private and inaccessible collections, and if a knowledge of the fine arts enlarge the understanding and refine the taste, stimulate the lofty and improve the vulgar, why does our country linger behind in an attempt to cultivate a taste the people would apply to so much general advantage? it cannot be on account of the expense; for any amount, *thus* to improve a rich, manufacturing, and commercial country, must be amply repaid; enormous sums are expended in procuring patterns and models from France, and a still greater loss is sustained to the country, on British goods of design in foreign markets.—France always first, because England has to wait for patterns—thus made the workshop, to stamp off the intelligence, and carry into effect the genius of other countries, where the fine arts are more cultivated.

Italy formerly had much of this, but France has taken up the art, and now possesses it all to herself; chiefly owing to the liberal spirit of her government, causing a constant pressure forward in all that relates to the arts and sciences.

The first object, however, in the arts, is to enlighten

the people, and to cause an interest in the productions they view; therefore, the subjects to be introduced into a public gallery are of the *first* importance, —for there cannot be a doubt, that the frequent contemplation of what is dignified will have a certain tendency to exalt our minds, and nothing is so likely to make a lasting impression, as great pictorial works of art, which are not only a source of pleasure to the learned, but books to the unlearned.

Two late writers thus elegantly express themselves on the merits of Raphael's Cartoons; a deal of interesting matter will also be found:—

"That quality which has entitled Raphael to be justly regarded as one in the first rank of minds most highly gifted by the Creator, is the uniform subordination in these works, of the means to the end; the predominance of the intellectual and permanent, over the sensual and conventional. We behold in him, not only the Italian of the sixteenth century, but the contemporary and denizen of all enlightened times and christian lands, not the painter merely, but the historian, the poet, the philosopher, the ennobling expounder of human character, and emotions in all their elements."—*Book of the Cartoons*, by the Rev. Mr. Cattermole.

"The gradations and shades of passion and sentiment are so skilfully mingled in these subjects, and the moral so broad and pure, that we perpetually recur to them as transcripts of human life, which never cease to instruct and interest the mind; never fail to sooth and satisfy the heart.

"In his delineations of nature, Raphael was skilled in the perception of very beautiful and characteristic form; as full of

wisdom as the sublimest moralist, with all the elements of wisdom and morality most happily blended.

"Genius is the power of reflecting nature. The mind of Raphael was a magic mirror, in which all forms and combinations he undertook to delineate, were intuitively present, as native portions of his own humanity."—*Cartonancia*, by the Rev. Mr. Gunn.

The nine subjects of Raphael form a school of art, and no one who contemplates them will turn away without deriving moral improvement, and strong impressions of pictorial excellence.

In whatever way viewed, no other work existing appears so well calculated in all respects for a public gallery—a gallery for the people!

The Henry the Eighth set of Nine Subjects may be purchased—applications, post paid, *addressed to*

MR. WM. TRULL,

No. 9, King's Arms Yard, Coleman Street,

LONDON.